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ABSTRACT

Five pre-lessons provide a set of brief daily activities for children encountering school, and perhaps a teacher who speaks standard English, for the first time. These activities should increase the likelihood that the children will feel comfortable, and will respond vocally and enthusiastically during subsequent systematic instruction in standard American English. The teacher can conduct the pre-lessons effectively with almost no preparation. Pre-lessons contain both instructions and lessons; the rationale for each day's lesson is given in narrative form, followed by a numbered outline of the steps in the lesson. There is a development from teacher-led to pupil-led activities, and from almost no dependence on verbal instruction to preliminary testing for such dependence. A critical difference between the pre-lessons and directed instruction in language is that the children are not expected to produce or understand specific utterances during most of the pre-lessons. They are especially recommended for the first few days of school prior to beginning other oral language instructional programs. These activities have been pilot-tested with six groups of preschool children. Appendices contain instructions for making mats out of newspapers and the text of an introductory speech in English, Spanish, and Navajo. (Author/AM)

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PRE-LESSONS FOR USE WITH AN ORAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM

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PRE-LESSONS

An Introductory Sequence of Lessons

to Accompany an Oral Language Program

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INTRODUCTION

The Pre-lessons provide a set of brief daily activities for children encountering school -- and perhaps a teacher who speaks standard English -- for the first time. Participating in these activities should increase the likelihood that the children will feel comfortable, and will respond vocally and enthusiastically, during subsequent systematic instruction in speaking and listening to standard American English.

Miss Vivian Horner of Yeshiva University wrote the five Pre-lessons for the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory, Inc. (SWCEL) according to specifications prepared by Dr. Robert Reeback and Dr. Mavis Martin of the Laboratory. They were pilot tested during the spring of 1968 with six groups of children at one Head Start Center and two Child Development Centers. Miss Diane Achter of the Office of Navajo Economic Opportunity, Mrs. Pat Robinson, Mrs. Virginia Romero, and Mrs. Helen Frye of the Bernalillo County Economic Opportunity Board, and Mrs. Janis Randall of the Laboratory conducted the pilot trials with two of the groups. Where the children spoke only English, the Pre-lessons were conducted in Spanish.

The pilot trials confirmed that a teacher could conduct the Pre-lessons effectively with almost no preparation. Other questions concerning the nature and durability of change in the children's behavior, and the utility of the Pre-lessons in various pre-school and school situations remain to be answered by more extensive field testing.

Recordings of an introductory speech for use at the outset of the Pre-lessons were made in Navajo by Mr. John Chavez and in Spanish by Mrs. Sylvia Armijo. Texts of this speech in English, Spanish and Navajo are appended.

Pre-lessons contain both instructions and lessons. The rationale for each day's lesson is given in narrative form, followed by a numbered outline of the steps in the lesson. There are few materials required for teaching the Pre-lessons: about 10 mats or cushions, 10 shoe boxes, and one large ball will do it. Although a casual observer might not notice much difference among the daily lessons, there is a development from teacher-led to pupil-led activities, and from almost no dependence on verbal instruction to preliminary testing for such dependence. Some of the activities are strenuous; some more quiet. Since sitting on the floor is part of the plan, instructions in how to make mats out of newspaper are appended. instructions in how to make mats out of newspaper are appended.

A critical difference between the Pre-lessons and the directed instruction in language that follows them is that the children are not expected to produce or understand specific utterances during most of the Pre-lessons. If they speak and hear English, that is well and good, but the focus is on other kinds of behavior, e.g. participating with and before the group, imitating the teacher. The Pre-lessons are especially recommended for the first few days of school prior to beginning instruction with the Oral Language Program developed by SWCEL. However, they may be used prior to beginning other oral language instructional programs as well.

Robert T. Reeback

PRE-LESSONS

DAY 1

The basic idea of the pre-lessons is to make the English Corner a "fun" area, a place in the room where the nicest things happen. While this idea is being established through participation in games and noisy activities, children are also learning the skills which they will need to profit from a program such as the Oral Language Program, e.g. paying attention, responding individually, and getting up in front of the group. It is a good idea to always follow the English lesson with some activity the children like a lot. This might be recess, lunch, finger-painting, or quiet desk activities like clay-modeling or doing puzzles. This schedule can later be put to use by insisting on satisfactory completion of the English lesson before a child is permitted access to these other activities.

The English Corner (or the "English Circle") may be an area of the classroom especially set aside for English learning activities, or a special room. It should be large enough to accommodate the teacher and eight to ten children, all seated on the floor. Each child should have his own mat or cushion, which not only gives him something of his very own in the English Corner, but also provides the teacher with additional control over seating later in the program.

The goals for the first day are to provide an opportunity for the child to get used to his new environment, to relate to his teacher without fear, to look at the teacher when he speaks to him, to "take his place" in the English Corner.

When you are ready to begin the English lesson for the first time, have an explanation given to the children in their native language that this is a new kind of game they are going to learn. They should be told that several children will be called to the English Corner to play at the same time, and that as each child enters the area, he will receive a cushion of his own. He is to put it on the floor and sit on it. All the children and the teacher will then sit in a large circle and play ball.

This preliminary explanation can be given by an aide or someone else who has been previously asked to give it, or can be presented by tape or record. If some children show reluctance to go to the English Corner, the first group should be assembled from the more willing ones, moving them physically, but gently, if necessary. As they begin to roll the ball back and forth, and laugh and yell, the other children will see that there is nothing to be afraid of.

The ball-rolling serves several purposes. First, it provides the teacher with a chance to call each child by name several times, and reward him for attention by rolling the ball to him. She can also keep up a continuous patter in English, so that the children's ears become accustomed to hearing it in an agreeable setting. By joining the children in the circle, the teacher does not set herself apart, and this lessens any fear that may be generated by the fact that she is a stranger. Children should be encouraged to make as much noise as is compatible with learning, preferably vocal noise. If they yell and laugh, fine. The idea is to have the English Corner be a "special privilege" area. Encouraging vocal activity of all kinds will help break through later shyness in responding orally.

The amount of time spent on this "lesson" is flexible. One session of ten minutes may get the children relaxed and active; it may take longer. Or, two sessions in one day may be more productive. However the lesson is spaced, it should be followed by an activity which the children value.

When the first group has completed its turn, a second group should be assembled, following the same procedure (dropping the introduction, if it seems no longer necessary), and so forth, until all children have had their lesson.

OUTLINE: 10 - 20 minutes, one session or two.

1) **Introduction in child's native language (person or record).**
2) **First group to English Corner.**
3) **Children get cushions.**
4) **Children seated on floor in circle.**
5) **Teacher rolls ball, calling child by name. Child rolls it back.**
6) **Child may roll to other child as teacher identifies receiver by name.**
7) **Child may identify another child by name and roll to him.**
8) **Follow by pleasant activity.**

(Repeat steps 1 - 8 with the remaining groups).

Rolling the Ball

PRE-LESSONS
DAY 2

One goal of the second day is to teach the children that several kinds of behaviors sometimes forbidden in the classroom are appropriate to the English Corner; that is, jumping, running, waving the arms, and so forth. A second goal is to get the children engaged in responding as a group, with the teacher leading. Finally, this session should see one or more children coming forward to lead the group, with the teacher as one of the group.

When the children come to the English Corner the second day (the aide or record may be used again, if necessary), each child is given a box with his name on it. These should be roughly the size of a shoebox, but differently shaped boxes will be found useful in later lessons. He sits down on his cushion (already placed) and holds the box in his lap.

The goals are again accomplished within a game framework, building on the prior day's experience. The game to be played is Follow-the-Leader.

An aide may be used to explain what is expected of the children, but the teacher may find it more useful to simply help the children up physically, and line them up behind her. She then performs some motor task, like raising her arms in the air, and if the children do not mimic the action, she turns to the child behind her and raises his arms, motioning the other children to do the same. During all this time, the teacher talks naturally in English, including in appropriate places commands like "Stand up," "Raise your hands," "Touch your foot," "Clap your hands," and so forth.

When the children have gotten the idea of mimicking, the teacher leads them in running, hopping, sitting, jumping, waving the arms, and anything else that she may find useful later, or which may serve to identify the English Corner with agreeable activity. After a few minutes of strenuous activity, the teacher and children may sit and play Follow-the-Leader with quieter activities, such as raising the arms, right and left, stretching the legs, drumming on the boxes, and so forth. The cycle may be repeated numerous times.

During one of the more strenuous cycles, a gregarious child should be encouraged to play "leader," and lead the group in a line. This is the first step toward encouraging individual responses in front of the group. As time and energy permit, ball-playing may also be included.

When the session is completed, the children should be permitted a desirable activity.

OUTLINE: **10 - 20 minutes, one session**

1) **Cushions placed on floor.**
2) **Children to the English Corner (via motion, aide or tape).**
3) **Each child gets his own box.**
4) **Children sit on own cushions, hands in lap.**
5) **Line up for Follow - the - Leader.**
6) **Play Follow - the - Leader, with teacher leading (jumping, running, waving arms, etc.); then quieter activities (sitting, raising arms, etc.).**
7) **Play Follow - the - Leader, with volunteer child leading.**
8) **(Optional: ball-playing).**
9) **Follow by pleasant activity.**

(Repeat the steps with the remaining groups).

Follow the Leader: Walking (a pupil replaces the teacher as leader)

PRE-LESSONS
DAY 3

The goals of the third day are to get each child to act as "leader" on a rotation basis, to get the children as a group to imitate physical actions modeled by the teacher, to get the boys as a group and the girls as a group to imitate the teacher's models, and finally, to get individual children to imitate the teacher when called upon to do so. As the teacher models physical actions, she will also give verbal commands to accompany them, thus introducing the children to instructions in English.

The first goal can be approached by building on the prior day's experience. Starting with Follow - the - Leader again, the child (or children) who were brave enough to "be first" yesterday start off as leaders of the group. Then each child in turn should be encouraged to be "leader." When each child has led the game at least once, the teacher takes over and leads the children back to the circle and gets them seated.

The next game to be introduced is "Simon Says." Only the first part of the game is to be played; that is, the part where the teacher gives a command, then models the correct response and the children imitate her. For instance, she begins, "Simon Says, 'Hands up!' " The teacher raises both hands. Then the children raise both hands. The idea is to establish the teacher as model, and to get the children accustomed to following her instructions. Certainly at first, the children will be responding only to the teacher's physical models, but since the verbal commands always occur at the same time, the children will eventually learn to respond to them without the teacher's model.

Playing "Simon Says," the teacher instructs, and models responses to a series of commands, such as "Raise your hand," "hide your eyes," "heads down," and so forth. The children respond as a group. The game is often more fun for the children if they can drum or stamp feet, while the "Simon Says" phrase is dragged out by the teacher, than a quick response called for when the command is given. This procedure also makes for careful attending to the teacher. The teacher will also be able to observe when the responses of some of the children come under the control of the verbal command only, because they will respond with or before the teacher's model.

Once the children have gotten the idea of the game and are responding well, the teacher should rearrange the children with all the girls on one side, and all the boys on the other. With hand gestures from side to side, she teaches "Boys" and "Girls." The game continues with just the boys responding, then just the girls, then "Everyone."

The next step is to get individual children to respond alone. The teacher calls the child's name, gives a command, models the response and waits for the child to respond. This is repeated for all children in the group.

By these procedures, the children learn several patterns of responding which are later used in the regular lessons.

When the lesson has been successfully completed, the children should be permitted to do something they like.

OUTLINE: **15 - 25 minutes, one session**

1) **Cushions and boxes on floor.**
2) **Children to English Corner.**
3) **Follow - the - Leader, with child "leaders" from yesterday.**
4) **Follow - the - Leader, rotating, so each child has turn as leader.**
5) **Teacher takes over as leader, leads back to circle, sits down.**
6) **Teacher introduces "Simon Says" with correct physical models; children respond as group.**
7) **"Simon Says," with boys responding as group, then girls responding as group.**
8) **"Simon Says," with each child responding individually.**

(Repeat the steps with the remaining groups).

Simon Says, Hands Up

PRE-LESSONS
DAY 4

The goals of the fourth day are to get the children to respond verbally, for the first time, first as a group, then in smaller groups, and finally, as individuals.

Playing "Simon Says" again, the teacher first leads the children as a group through a review of yesterday's commands. Then, beginning with a short command, such as "Hands up," the teacher provides only a vocal model and gets the children to say, "Hands up." Then she provides both vocal and physical model and gets the children to say, "Hands up" as they put their hands up. This procedure is repeated a number of times with several (no more than four or five) commands.

When the children can say and respond to these few commands, the boys as a group "command" the girls as a group, the teacher providing the vocal model. The girls "follow instructions." Then they switch, and imitating the teacher's vocal model, the girls as a group "command" the boys, while they "follow instructions."

The next step is to get one girl to "command" the girls, as the teacher provides the model, then a boy to "command" the boys in the same manner. Finally, one child "commands" the entire group, following the teacher's model.

When the children can easily perform these tasks, the teacher should take a volunteer or select a child who is particularly at ease, and have him "command" the group all by himself; that is, without the teacher model.

The lesson should be followed by another pleasant activity.

OUTLINE: 20 - 30 minutes, one session.

1) Cushions and boxes on floor, girls on one side, boys on other.
2) Children to English Corner.
3) Play "Simon Says," teacher leading through review of yesterday's commands.
4) Children say short command, following teacher's vocal model.
5) Children say short command, while they respond physically to it, following teacher's vocal and physical model.
6) Repeated with several short commands.
7) With teacher providing vocal model, boys "command" girls; then girls "command" boys.
8) With teacher providing vocal model, one girl "commands" girls, a boy "commands" boys. Rotate individual children.
9) With teacher providing vocal model, single child "commands" group. Rotate individual children.
10) With no teacher model, single child conducts game.

(Repeat the steps with the remaining groups).

PRE-LESSONS
DAY 5

The goal of the fifth day is to determine to what extent the children's responses are controlled by the verbal commands, and to see whether they have learned enough to play games in English with little assistance from the teacher.

Playing "Simon Says" once again, the teacher first reviews all the commands and motions that the children have learned, providing both vocal and physical models and requiring that the children echo her vocal models as they go through the accompanying motions.

Then the teacher provides only the verbal commands and the children respond. If they have difficulty with this, it should be practiced until they can do it easily. When they can follow the commands easily, they are ready to learn the rest of the game; that is, the verbal command is given, but a wrong physical action is performed by the leader. For example, the teacher says, "Simon Says, 'Hands up!' ", but she puts her hands over her ears. Learning this phase of the game will undoubtedly take some practice but when the children have learned it, individual children should be selected to lead the game and the children allowed to play with only supervision from the teacher.

Finally the children should be left to play by themselves to see whether they will spontaneously play in English. A ball might also be provided, in case they prefer that game.

OUTLINE: **20 - 30 minutes, one session**

1) Cushions on floor, boys' and girls' mixed.
2) Children to English Corner.
3) Play "Simon Says." Teacher provides models, vocal and physical, reviews everything learned so far.
4) Teacher provides verbal commands, children follow instructions. Practice until children can do it easily.
5) Learn full game. Teacher commands, provides physical miscue. Practice until children can do it easily.
6) Individual child leads game, teacher supervising.
7) Children left alone to play. Teacher observes.

(Repeat the steps with the remaining groups).

Note: The times on these sessions are flexible. The interest shown by the children should determine the length, up to the time limit the teacher must impose in order to get other things done.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY SPEECH

(English)

1. Today boys and girls we are going to learn a new game.
2. We will play this game every day.
3. We will always play the game right here.
4. We'll call this the English corner.
5. Can you say English corner -- English corner?
6. Everyone can play the game but not at the same time.
7. One half of you will stay here (show this in gestures).
8. And one half of you will stay over there (show this in gestures).
9. When it's your turn to play the game, you will get *your own mat* to sit on.
10. See all of these things -- (point to the materials) they are to use in the English corner.
11. Are you ready to learn the game?
12. O.K., then, would this half of the class (gesture) come to the English corner right now.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY SPEECH

(Spanish)

1. ¡Hoy! Niños, vamos a aprender un juego nuevo.
2. Jugaremos este juego todos los días.
3. Nosotros siempre jugaremos el juego aquí.
4. Llamaremos a éste el rincón Inglés (o "el English Corner").
5. ¿Puede Ud. decir rincón Inglés, rincón Inglés?
6. Todos pueden jugar, pero no a la misma vez.
7. La mitad de ustedes se quedará aquí. (Muestra esto con gestos)
8. Y la otra mitad se quedará alla. (Muestra esto con gestos)
9. Cuando se llega su turno de jugar, tomará su tapete para sentarse.
10. Miren Uds. todas estas cosas. (Apunte al material) Son para usarse en el rincón Inglés.
11. ¿Están listos para aprender el juego?
12. ¡Bueno! Entonces, la mitad de la clase pase para el rincón Inglés de una vez.

APPENDIX A
SAMPLE INTRODUCTORY SPEECH

(Navajo)

1. Alchini diijii danei a'aniidigi binaadahodiil a.
2. Dii danei taa akwiiji bi ndaaneedoleh.
3. Ado iinda danei taa alahji akwe'e bei ndaaneedo.
4. Dii di English Corner wolyeego doleil.
5. K'ad English Corner daadoniih. **ENGLISH CORNER**
6. T'a'a' aanoltso dii danei bei nidaaneedoleil; akodniidi, do alahjidaa'.
7. Alni'i doo ayah, akwe'e ndaatsotwah dolei'l.
8. Ado taa alni'iidoo eyah,nileidi ndaatsotwah dolei'l.
9. Niwhahoolzhiishgo, bikii naeestwahnigii nihah dooneel.
10. Dii kwe'e sinil'liigii dadilnoil'iil. Dii English Corner bihoo'aahigii bien yei.
11. Ka'dish ndaanee bihdawhiidiil'aal?
12. Hagooshi'la; k'ad alni'ido'o' English Corner goh dikah.

APPENDIX B

"SIT UPONS"

MATERIALS: 16 pieces of newspaper (the double page)

normal fold in a newspaper

INSTRUCTIONS: 1. Fold a sheet of newspaper in half along the normal fold.

2. Fold the sheet in half lengthwise 3 more times.

3. Lay 8 of the folded strips in a line right next to each other.

4. Starting in the center, weave one strip: over one vertical strip and under the next; over one and under the next, etc.

5. To weave the second strip begin with the opposite action of the first strip. For example, since the action of the first was over and under, the action of the second is under and over; under and over.

6. Continue in this manner until you have a square of 8 strips by 8 strips.

7. Make sure all of the strips are right next to each other -- leaving no spaces.

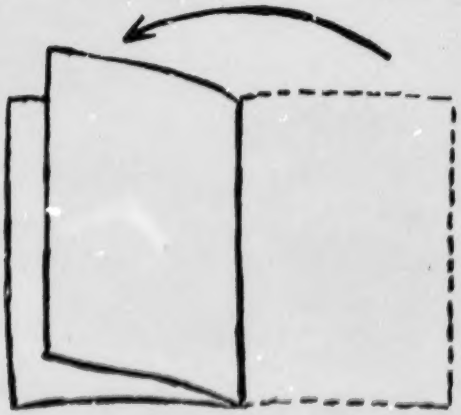
8. Now, you should have equal amounts of strips left at all sides of the mat.

9. To finish the sides, pull a strip tight from the center of one of the sides. Make sure that it is a strip that ends *under* another strip ( ). Pull the strip over the horizontal strip and tuck under. Continue in this manner for all strips -- leaving the 8 corner strips for the last.

APPENDIX B

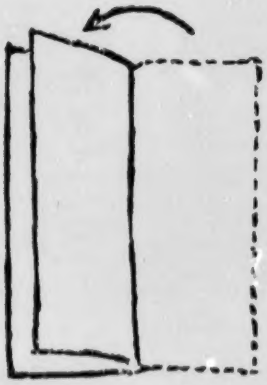
"SIT UPONS"

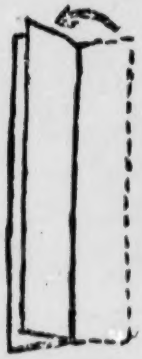
MATERIALS: 16 pieces of newspaper (the double page)

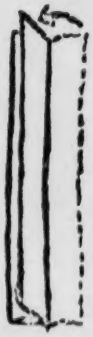


normal fold in a newspaper

INSTRUCTIONS: 1. Fold a sheet of newspaper in half along the normal fold







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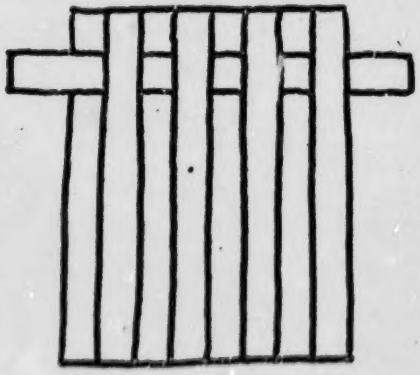

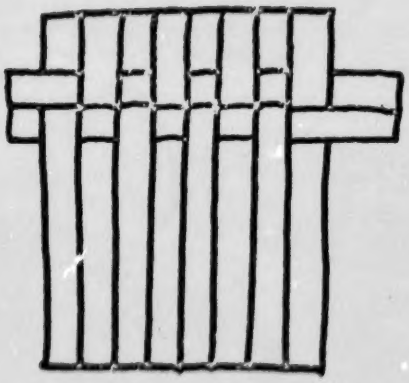

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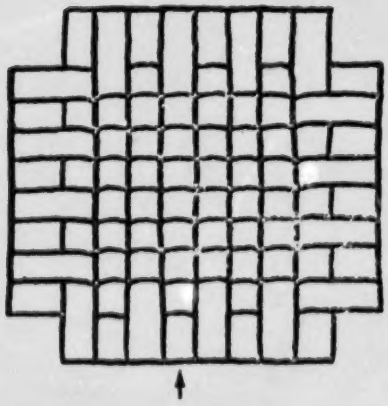

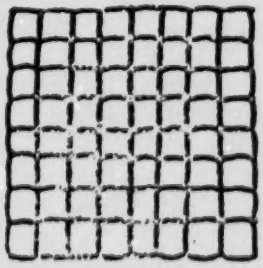

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